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August 31, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: Administrators of Hospitals, Nursing Homes, Intermediate Care Facilities for the Mentally Retarded, Community Residential Care Facilities, Day Care Facilities for Adults, Ambulatory Surgical Facilities, and Renal Dialysis Facilities

FROM: Dennis L. Gibbs, Director
Division of Health Licensing

Kevin G. Ridenour, Director
Fire and Life Safety Program

SUBJECT: Alcohol Based Hand Sanitizers

In an effort to be consistent with industry standards but also ensure that minimum fire safety requirements are maintained, the following requirements outlining the placement and use of alcohol based hand sanitizers shall serve as the minimum standard for health care facilities. The position established in this memorandum is a result of a joint effort between the Office of The State Fire Marshal and the Department.

The practice of using an alcohol based hand sanitizer to disinfect the hands of health care staff may help reduce the infection rate in health care facilities. Health care facilities, as related to fire safety, are designed to be "defend in place" facilities. The addition of flammable substances in the exit egress corridor could greatly diminish the ability of the staff to protect the occupants of the facility. The life safety of the occupants must be considered before the convenience of the staff. Since several different national consensus codes address the issue of flammable liquids, this policy will serve as the focal point on this issue.

Definitions:

Alcohol Based Hand Sanitizer: A liquid/gel having an alcohol content greater than 62% alcohol.

Dispenser: A single container that is mounted to the wall and does not exceed 1.2 liters in volume.

Fire Area: An area of a building separated from the remainder of the building by construction having a fire resistance rating of 1 hour and having all communicating openings properly protected by approved fire rated doors.

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- Two dispensers of an alcohol based hand sanitizer in individual volumes not exceeding 1.2 liters may be placed in an exit egress corridor, or a space open to the corridor within each fire area, provided the area is protected with quick response sprinkler heads.
- Dispensers shall be isolated from high temperatures and ignition sources such as, but not limited to, open flame, electrical equipment, switches or receptacles.
- Dispensers shall not be mounted above or within 6 inches of electrical switches or receptacles.
- Dispensers shall not be mounted over carpeting.
- Alcohol based products may have hazardous reactions with strong oxidizers or inorganic acids. This product should not be dispensed, stored or handled near oxygen sources, oxidizers or inorganic acids.
- This policy does not affect the placement or use of containers of alcohol sanitizers that are not mounted and do not exceed 4 ounces in volume.

If violations are found, the product shall be removed and placed in an area that meets the requirements of this policy.

This policy supersedes the previous policy of the Office of The State Fire Marshal, dated May 1, 2005.

DLG: KGR:

Cc:

Karen Price, Bureau of Certification

Michael D. Platt, State Fire Marshal

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